

NSAM 156 file

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TCS-5818-68

Copy No. 12

3 May 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT: History of NSAM-156 Committee

1. In accordance with your recent request, attached for your information is a precis of the legislative history and the activities of the subject committee.

2. In summary, NSAM-156, issued by President Kennedy in May 1962, asked for recommended policy positions which would help gain international acceptance of the legitimacy of U.S. satellite reconnaissance for peaceful purposes without compromising our intelligence and military programs. The 156 Committee considered this problem and in July 1962 most of its recommendations were approved as NSC Action 2454. Since then, the 156 Committee has been convoked several times to deal with similar matters. The record of its actions is related in the attached background memorandum.

3. As NASA's unclassified programs advance to the point of using photographic equipment equal in sophistication to that of our NRO programs, the point of balance between the two opposing objectives of NSAM-156 will become increasingly delicate. In this connection, the attached outline of the statutory responsibilities of the DCI indicate that he must be concerned with NASA photo reconnaissance activities from the standpoint of protecting intelligence sources and methods.

4. Copies of NSAM's, NSC Actions and other pertinent records are available in CGS which holds an almost complete file on the 156 Committee's activities.

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James J. Hitchcock
Chief
DD/I Collection Guidance Staff

Attachment

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Background Information on Actions Considered by the
National Security Action Memorandum #156 Ad Hoc
Committee

1. National Security Action Memorandum 156 was issued by President Kennedy on 26 May 1962 to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The memorandum stated that US engagement in several international negotiations on disarmament and peaceful uses of outer space had raised "the problem of what constitutes legitimate use of outer space, and in particular, the question of satellite reconnaissance". The President further stated: "In view of the great national security importance of our satellite reconnaissance program, I think it desirable that we carefully review these negotiations with a view to formulating a position which avoids the dangers of restricting ourselves, compromising highly classified programs, or providing assistance of significant military value to the Soviet Union and which at the same time permits us to continue to work for disarmament and international cooperation in space". Accordingly the President requested the Department of State to organize a committee for this purpose, with representatives of each of the addressees who would have "sufficient standing to permit them to be fully cognizant of all our programs in this area".

2. The first meeting of the Committee was held on 1 June 1962 with Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson as Chairman. Dr. Herbert Scoville, Jr. was designated as the representative of the DCI. Other members were Paul Nitze for DOD, Adrian Fisher for ADCA, Robert C. Seamans, Jr., for NASA and Joseph Charyk for NRO.

3. After several meetings in June 1962, the Committee submitted a report to the National Security Council on 9 July 1962 which formulated 19 statements as recommended U.S. policy on outer space and, in particular, on satellite reconnaissance.

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4. The Committee was unanimous on 17 of these points and, while there was divergence of opinion on the other two (numbers 18 and 19), all 19 statements were presented to the Council. After revising statement 18 (dealing with advance notification of space launching and missile firings), the 18 recommendations were approved by the NSC and were issued as NSC Action 2454 dated 10 July 1962. Recommendation 19, which dealt with a proposal for a separate arms control agreement banning weapons of mass destruction from being carried in satellites, was referred back to the NSAM 156 Committee. (No further record of this action is available) The NSC also noted at the 9 July 1962 meeting the President's request that the NSAM 156 Committee develop instructions for Ambassador Dean during the "forthcoming" disarmament talks. (Only one draft of these instructions is available.)

5. The first action under NSC 2454 was issued by Mr. McGeorge Bundy as NSAM 183 on 27 August 1962. This memorandum stated the President desires that the US space program be "forcefully explained and defended at the forthcoming sessions of the UN Outer Space Committee and the General Assembly" and directed that the Department of State consult with the Department of Defense, CIA (Dr. Scoville), NASA, AEC, ACDA and the Office of the Science Adviser to develop positions to meet this requirement. There is no record, however, of the 156 Committee becoming involved in this directive.

6. During 1963, the 156 Committee apparently did not meet as a Committee. Several of its members, however, were involved in meetings concerned with NSAM 216 which directed State, DOD and CIA to study disclosure of US satellite reconnaissance capability in terms of: (1) disclosure to high-level Soviet officials of selected satellite reconnaissance capabilities; and (2) the holding by the US Ambassador in Moscow of suitable material which would be disclosed to the Soviets only in case of a crisis situation. Certain 156 Committee members were also convened for a meeting relating to NSC Action 2454 in June 1963 to consider a DOD proposal for the release of down-graded ARGON material for international use in mapping and charting in order to help create a wider public acceptance of photography from space. The proposal was disapproved by this group.

7. In December 1963, the Chairman of the 156 Committee circulated a memorandum for consideration at an 8 January 1964 meeting. Again, in view of White House discussions on satellite reconnaissance

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capabilities vis-a-vis disarmament, the Committee was to consider: (1) the release of more information to our allies in order to strengthen our positions on military strategy and arms control proposals, and (2) the feasibility of pressing the Soviets to become less rigid in their views toward inspection and other disarmament proposals. In a series of subsequent meetings (during January 1964) the Committee concluded that no additional actions to disseminate more information were needed at that time in support of US disarmament and other policies. (During this series of meetings, Dr. Wheelon and Dr. Cline represented the Agency; Dr. Scoville, previously transferred, represented ACDA.)

8. In June 1964, a new series of meetings was convened to reconsider earlier disclosure policies in view of statements which had been made by Khrushchev on satellite reconnaissance. At the first meeting of this series, on 6 June 1964, the members were asked to prepare position papers on: (1) the advisability of revealing information to the public on our satellite reconnaissance programs, including some of the successes achieved, and (2) the advisability of making similar disclosures in private diplomatic discussions with Soviet officials. During subsequent meetings in June and July 1964, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, the Committee recommended (a) that no private disclosures should be made to the Soviets, (b) that the permanent representative to the NATO Advisory Council and certain heads of States be briefed (or rebriefed) in light of more current international conditions and statements, and (c) that a "White Paper" on the US and Soviet programs be prepared for contingency use. Consideration was also given to the release of an ACDA-requested Rand Report "Inspection Satellites" and a committee-approved briefing for the NATO Advisory Council was prepared (but we understand was not used by the DCI who used his own version). A draft "White Paper" was reviewed and set aside for updating when and if required, and (at least within CIA) approval for the release of the Rand Report was refused. It is not clear whether this study was ever released.

9. The NSAM 156 Committee was apparently inactive from September 1964 until 22 September 1965, when Ambassador Thompson called a meeting to consider some of the questions which had arisen in connection with GEMINI V and the public announcement of the MOL program. No action was taken at this meeting, but State was asked to prepare and issue a draft paper on possible reciprocal inspection of space vehicles. On 6 October 1965, State circulated for comment and recommended concurrence in, a paper, "An Offer for Inspection of the MOL". A coordinated Agency response to this paper, by Dr. Cline as CIA representative, on 26 October 1965, recommended against such an offer except in a situation of most serious gravity.

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10. The NSAM 156 Committee has not met since September 1965. On 4 April 1966, however, Mr. Schultze, Director BOB, and Dr. Hornig, Director, President's Office of Science and Technology, requested the Secretary of State to convene the Committee to consider the conflicts which are arising in satellite reconnaissance between the classified programs under the National Reconnaissance Program (NRP) and the unclassified programs proposed under NASA's APOLLO Applications Programs (AAP).

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The Statutory Responsibilities of the DCI

1. The National Security Act of 1947, as amended states (Section 102. d. 3): "that the Director of Central Intelligence shall be responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure."

2. National Security Council Intelligence Directive #1 (revised 4 March 1964) states: "The Director of Central Intelligence, with the assistance and support of the members of the U.S. Intelligence Board, shall ensure the development of policies and procedures for the protection of intelligence and of intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure."

3. In specific regard to the products of satellite reconnaissance and information of the fact of such reconnaissance revealed by the product, the DCI's role was defined in President Eisenhower's letter of 26 August 1960 (TCS-9784-61, TKH) which stated, in part: "The Director of Central Intelligence, in consultation with the U.S. Intelligence Board, will be responsible to me for determining all questions involved in the continued protection and control of the foregoing material and information."

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